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SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: SALAH AD DIN PROVINCIAL LEADERS SHOW SOLIDARITY IN WAKE OF SAMARRA BOMBINGS

Classified By: PRT Team Leader, Stephen Buckler, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY. The June 13 bombing of the Samarra Golden Mosque was met by Salah ad Din leaders with calm concern, matched with expressions of public confidence in the ability of Iraqi Security Forces to restore order. After receiving the news, Governor Hamad al-Shakti left a meeting of the "Salah ad Din Support Council" (ironically convened to discuss new tribal security responsibilities in the province) in order to personally appear at the front gate of the mosque and demonstrate his solidarity with the Samarra population and government's resolve to maintain order. Sunni Sheikhs already assembled for a provincial conference expressed concern, but continued their meeting without interruption. Provincial government leaders displayed strong leadership through both public statements condemning the attack and their expressed commitment to continue with new initiatives, such as the tribal sheikhs' meeting, aimed to counter terrorist elements within the province. END SUMMARY.

Sunni Sheikh Assembly Continues

¶3. (C) The June 13 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra sent ripples through provincial political leadership, both in government and among tribal leaders. The news for many came during a conference of approximately 100 Sunni tribal sheikhs from throughout the province, reportedly with the support from Shia sheiks. As the meeting was about to commence, Governor Hamad announced that the Golden Mosque received indirect mortar fire and that he was leaving immediately to demonstrate solidarity with the people of Samarra. The tribal sheikhs noted concern but continued the meeting without further interruption under the direction of the Deputy Governor.

¶4. (C) Immediately following the Sheikhs' Council meeting, Deputy Governor Abdullah expressed confidence in the abilities of the provincial government and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) commenting that the morning's Samarra attack was "not any worse than other problems" SaD faces. Abdullah, flanked in the meeting by the Provincial Deputy Chief of Police, COL Jassim, also shrugged off concerns that the Shia dominated ISF reinforcements entering Samarra to provide security for the Golden Mosque reconstruction efforts could enflame sectarian tensions. "The good people will do nothing, and the criminals do not care whether the ISF are Sunni or Shia," the Deputy Governor surmised. During a telephone interview with IPAO later in the afternoon, the Deputy Governor again demonstrated confidence and emphasized that everything was under control.

Governor Hamad: "We Will Always Stand Together"

¶ 5. (SBU) Governor Hamad left for Samarra without hesitation immediately upon receiving news of the bombing in order to demonstrate his resolve and solidarity with the people of Samarra. Reaching out to a publicly, Hamad delivered the following message which was later broadcast province-wide by SaD TV:

"In this difficult situation and at that holy place, I would like to say in the name of all Salah ad Din Province citizens that we condemn the act of the bombing that took place today at 9:30am that targeted the minarets of the holy Imam's Mosque in Samarra city. There are many criminals who try to destabilize the country and cause sectarian sedition among the people when committing such acts. We've lost many souls, blood, and properties in the past four years. Samarra city has tolerated a lot of harm as a result of such acts. The October 2004 incident lead to the death of 320 martyrs and damaged many properties and infrastructure. We will try our best to allocate the amounts of money needed to rebuild Samarra city. And of course with the tribal leaders, religious scholars, and the educated people, Samarra city will be able to stand on its feet again. We're sure that the citizens of Samarra city will be able to get past this and support the security operation in the city. We want to say 'enough' for blood and violence. All Iraqis will stand together when facing their problems."

¶ 6. (U) Hamad also met at the mosque with its resident instructor who thanked the Governor for coming to the mosque, telling him that "you always show that you care for the people and that you are very gentle with all people you meet."

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¶ 7. (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET reporting blog:
<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/Tikrit>.

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